



NEWS RELEASE

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HUDGENS: FATAL FIRE IN STEWART COUNTY WAS ACCIDENTAL

Atlanta -- Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph Hudgens said investigators with his office and the GBI have determined that a house fire in Stewart County that killed a family of three Sunday night was accidental.

Killed in the fire were Willie Pearl Walton, 87, her daughter Barbara Ann Walton, 65 and son Ernest Clyde Walton, 59. Hudgens said the cause of the fire at 168 Caboose Street, Richland, Ga., was unattended cooking on the stove.

"With this tragedy in Richland, we've had 18 fire deaths so far this year, with 5 related to unattended cooking in February," Hudgens said. "I urge Georgian to use extreme caution while cooking and heating their homes."

Commissioner Hudgens reminds Georgians to make sure they have working smoke alarms on each level of their home. Fire deaths typically rise as the weather gets colder.

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